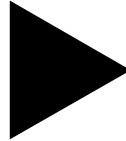


How to spot the signs of addiction in loved ones this holiday

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Recognizing addiction during the holidays



HUNTSVILLE, Ala. - Mental health counselor, Shannan Roberts, said holiday stress and loneliness can be a trigger for those who struggle with substance abuse. We talked with her about how to recognize the signs of addiction in your loved ones.

During the holidays, family comes home to visit or back from college. You're often seeing friends you haven't seen in a while, or family you don't get to check in with very often.

Roberts, who practices at Counseling Associates of Huntsville and specializes in addiction, said it can be a difficult time of year.

"A lot of people are looking for something on the outside to feel better on the inside, and that's basically what addiction is," she said, adding that it can be particularly difficult for those who have recently lost family members. "The holidays can be lonely and hurtful," she said. "They could reach for a glass of wine, or some beer, or whatever, to feel better."

Roberts is also Vice President and Co-Founder of Not One More Alabama, an organization that works to lift the stigma of substance use disorders and help those in crisis.

She said there are some signs of addiction you might notice in loved ones who come to visit or stay through Christmastime.

"They may try to isolate or go into the bathroom to use drugs. In some cases, they may look for something to steal. Something out of your purse or silver or something they can pawn to use drugs," she said. "Do understand that in the cold light of day and if they were in their right mind, this would not be their behavior."

She added that you might notice needles, or white residue on mirrors or surfaces in the room where this person is staying. Liquor bottles may be hidden in their belongings.

"Personalities and attitudes definitely change. They are likely to be more depressed. Might not want to get out of bed as much," she said. "A lot of times they don't have an appetite, they don't take care of themselves, they look disheveled."

Someone suffering from addiction to drugs may even seem sleepy, but Roberts said it could be something else.

"They could nod-out from using drugs," she said.

Roberts said these things can be difficult to see initially, especially if you aren't familiar with their typical personality. But she said if you think something may be going on, it's time to ask for help.

"I think the first thing is to reach out for professional help," she said. "Take them somewhere and get an assessment."

She recommends letting your loved one know that you care.

"There's not one right thing that can be said. You just hope you reach them at just the right time so they can hear you and know things have gone too far, 'I love you too much to let you hurt yourself, and let's check this out together.'"

She said it is important to remember to care for yourself, if you are worrying about a loved one who is dealing with substance abuse.

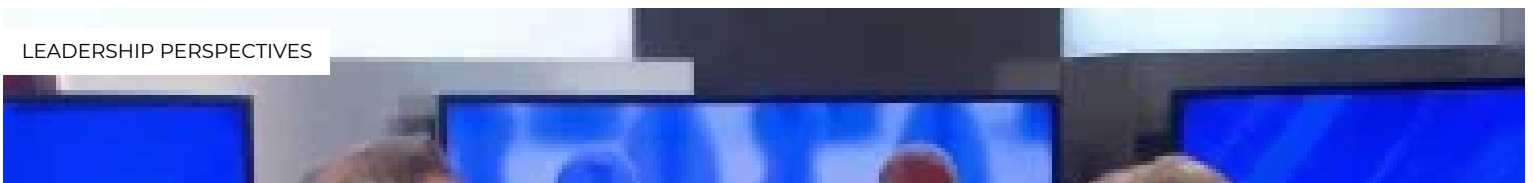
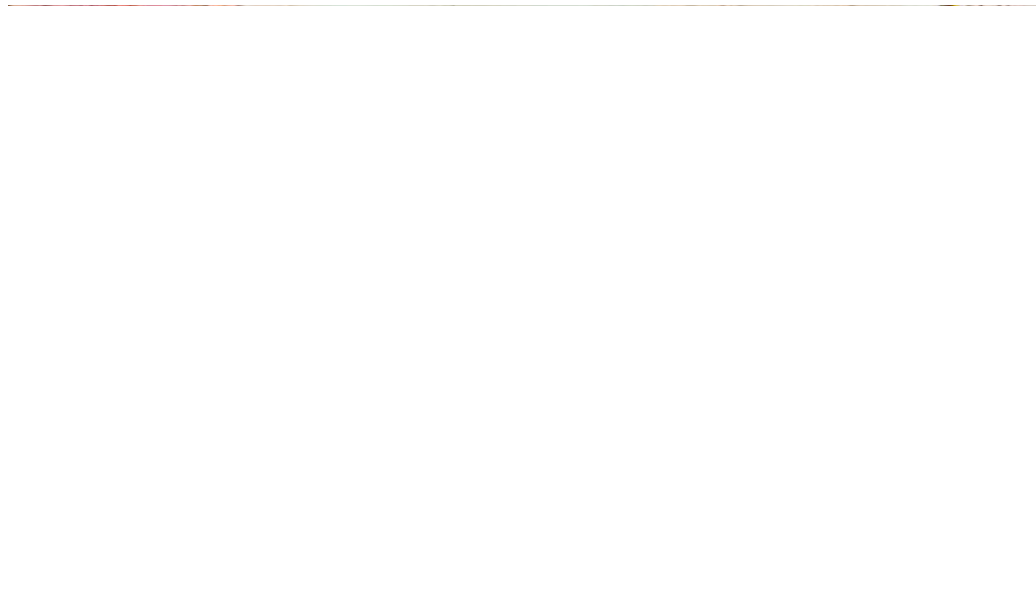
"Don't beat yourself up over it if you didn't recognize it to begin with, because people who are struggling with addiction are fooling themselves too. But they are very good at manipulating their family members and their loved ones and letting you think that everything is ok, saying just the right things," Roberts stated.

She said it's encouraged to be supportive, but has this warning for you: "You have to be really supportive, but you also have to know what that line is so you are not enabling as well."

She added, "Letting them know you love them and that you are there for them is huge for somebody struggling with addiction." Further saying, "One of the biggest things is to make your home a safe environment for them. Not a place where there is drugs or alcohol available. Not a place where they feel like they have to do something to fit in."

Not One More Alabama has a list of resources available on this issue that you can find by clicking [here](#).

You can also call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357). The website says it is a "free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders."

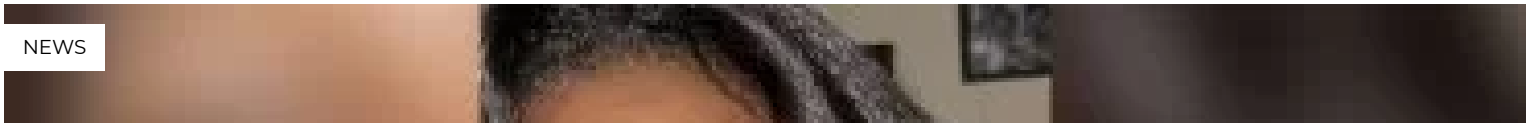




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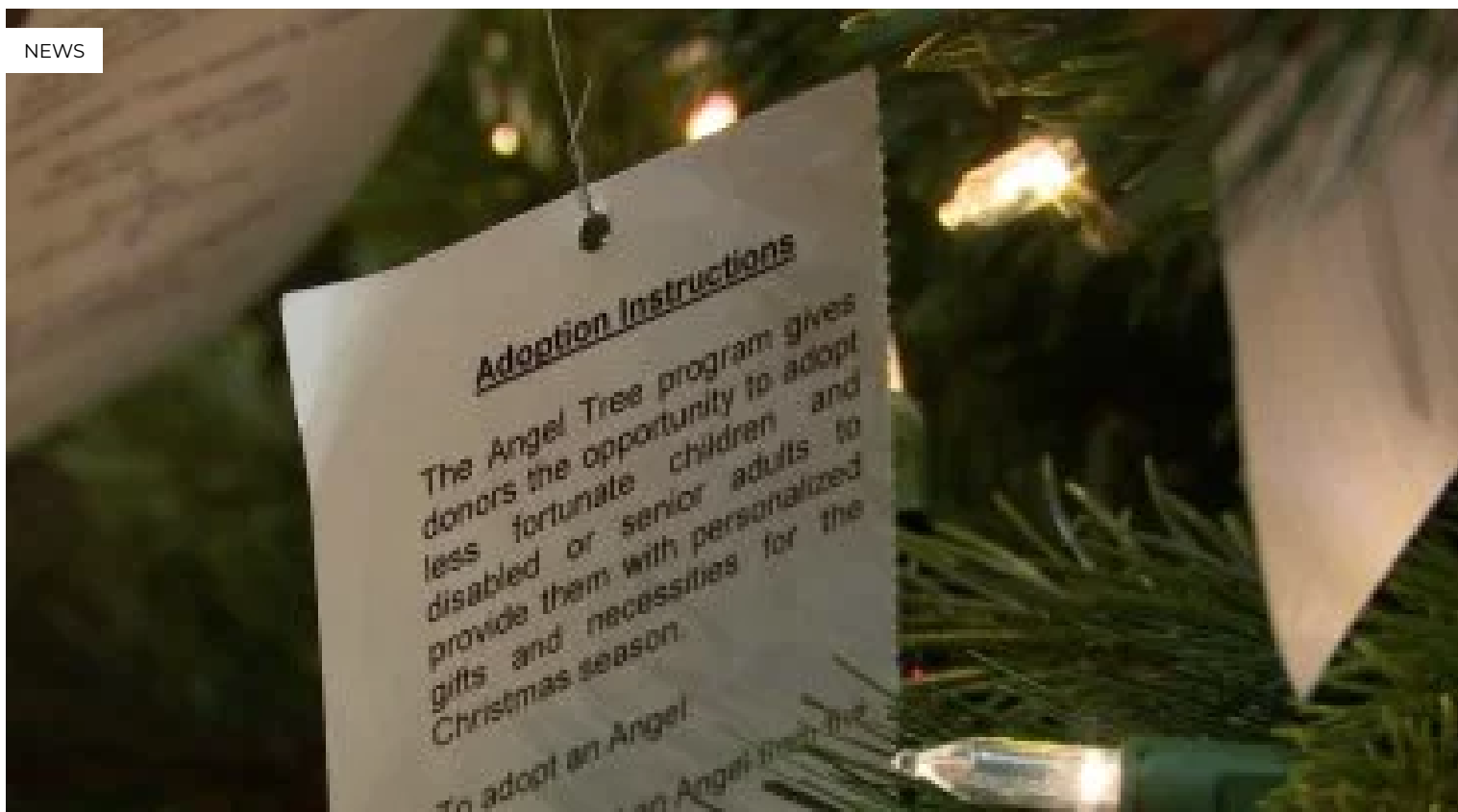
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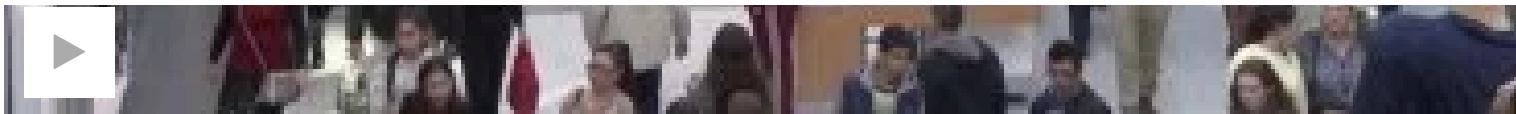


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